

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCESMETHODSEXEMPTION 3B2B
VAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
DATE 2007

Re : The present situation of Ukrainian catholics in the Ukraine , in the aftermath of Podgornyi's visit to the Pope

Date : 31 May 1967

Source : *Accompanying
Who*

The following information was obtained from one of the highest authorities of Ukrainian Catholic Church in Rome ,Italy on 23 May 1967: *(Buchko)*

1. A gradually developing "connivance" on the part of Soviet authorities at religious practices of Ukrainian catholics in the West Ukraine has followed Podgornyi's trip to the Pope. Until now about 70 churches in West Ukraine have been "re-opened" by the catholic faithful in various villages and registered "in blank" or rather only reported to the authorities about their existence and more or less regularly held religious services. The authorities have not interfered so far in the masses and other services but on the contrary showed unprecedent tolerance and ~~and went~~ understanding". They refuse however to formally register the reopened churches as catholic pointing out that the Catholic Church is still outlawed and could be not registered as such. Instead Kiev suggests to find a new formula , for instance "The Eastern church" or something similar.

The faithful do not acquiesce to such formulas and insist on being registered as catholic. This is done on "quiet instructions" from the Vatican which continues to exert diplomatic pressure on Soviet authorities taking advantage of Podgornyi's visit to the Pope.

The Source was of the opinion the chances were quite good to slowly obtain some sort of official recognition of Ukrainian catholics by Soviet authorities provided the present attitude of Soviet authorities would not change .

So far ,however, the reopened church es have remained unregistered or rather as some people called it " registered in blanco ".

2. The authorities have indicated that they are also fully aware of existence of "private catholic monasteries" in Lvov but did not mind it as long as they did not profess their faith and/or otherwise act in public.

3. According to the Source the Ukrainian Cathdic hierarchy in Rome had^a record of about 1,000 patholic priests in the Soviet Union and more or less continued to "count on them". With a great satisfaction they (in Rome) also appraised the fact that recently quite a large number of young people had joined the ranks of "secret" catholic monks andpriests.

4. After Podgornyi's visit new efforts are also made by the ~~Vatican diplomacy~~ to induce the Soviet authorities to give to Ukrainian catholics one of the closed Polish churches in Lvov.